

whom have demonstrated their love of country in defending our borders and our way of life. But in remembering and applauding their service, we must also recognize America's next veteran generation: the men and women in uniform today. Our duty as lawmakers is to ensure that our service members' commitment to the Nation is matched by the Government's diligence in preparing them to face our current and future threats. Also important is the quality of life that these service members and their families deserve. It should, therefore, be a priority to improve the salaries, benefits, and facilities that our military men and women, and their families, rely upon.

America's troops on the ground, on the sea, and in the air make up the most capable military force in all the world, and their equipment and support systems should be nothing less than first rate. The current war on terrorism and the changing threats of the 21st century demand a new level of readiness from our military that can only be met with better funding and more effective programs. The Nation's Armed Forces need to be prepared for the realities of a new security paradigm and a new kind of combat. Last year's terrorist attacks have changed our understanding of modern warfare and the need to protect our cities and our citizens. And in response to this realization, the Senate has passed legislation to increase spending so that our military can be equipped and trained to counter the world's growing, nontraditional threats.

We owe much to our veterans: respect and admiration, in addition to appropriate retirement and healthcare benefits. We can most greatly honor these men and women, however, by focusing on the needs of the current service members who will one day be veterans themselves. We must support their mission today so that we can celebrate their accomplishments tomorrow. I encourage my colleagues and my fellow Americans to join me in paying tribute to the veterans, past, present and future, who are an indispensable part of what makes our country the greatest in the world.

NOMINATION OF JAMES L. JONES TO BE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, EUROPE, SACEUR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the nomination of Gen. James Jones to be Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. General Jones has served in the Marine Corps with tremendous skill and dedication, and I know he will make an equally effective U.S. and NATO commander in Europe.

I first met General Jones when he served as a Corps liaison here in the U.S. Senate in the mid-1980s. Like other Marines, then Major Jones was quiet about his war record but I learned he served gallantly in Vietnam. In some of the worldwide travel that

the Corps supported and he helped arrange, I quickly realized that the service had itself a man of exceptional intellect, skill, and determination. In other words, the Corps possessed a leader in every sense of the word.

Despite his fluent French and obvious sense of diplomacy, General Jones is foremost a warrior and his career is dominated by such critical assignments as commanding the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. I visited this prestigious unit when it participated in Operation Provide Comfort after the Gulf War. One of the most impressive sights I have ever seen was then Colonel Jones giving crisp orders to his Marines only miles outside of the Iraqi town of Zaku while Air Force A-10 Thunderbolts provided aerial cover. He brought his typical professionalism to other combat-related assignments.

As the 32d Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Jones has served exceptionally. Under his leadership, the Marine Corps has developed new capabilities that will help America's 9-1-1 force to operate effectively at greater distances. In response to September 11 attacks, General Jones ordered the creation of a new unit to protect the country domestically, in addition to inspiring Marines to serve in truly outstanding action in Afghanistan and across the turbulent Middle East.

It is a testament to his achievements and character that the President selected General Jones to become the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. General Jones will be the first Marine to take on this most prestigious military command. He faces a number of challenges, including navigating the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance along with the prosecuting the war on terrorism. He will command an enormous Area of Responsibility, including much of Africa where the AIDS/HIV epidemic promises to create untold security instabilities. If anyone is up to leading allied forces to protect our interests and promote our values it is Jim Jones.

Marcelle and I wish General Jones and his wife Diane all the best as they move to Mons, Belgium. Based on our friendship and contact over the years, I know he will make us proud. I congratulate him, and, as an American, I am thankful our country has his services.

ANTON'S LAW, H.R. 5504

Mr. FITZGERALD. Mr. President, I rise today to applaud the passage of Anton's Law, H.R. 5504, by the House of Representatives.

I introduced the Senate version of Anton's Law, S. 980, in May 2001. S. 980 is named in memory of Anton Skeen, a four-year-old who was killed in a car crash in Washington State. Anton's mother Autumn—a national passenger safety advocate—believes that Anton's life could have been saved had he been riding in a booster seat. Designed specifically to help standard adult seat belts fit better, booster seats are used

to protect children who have outgrown their car seats but are still too small to fit properly in an adult-sized safety belt. On average, children in this group range from 4 to 8 years of age, weigh 40 to 80 pounds, and are less than 4 feet 9 inches tall. It has been reported that only about 5 to 6 percent of these 19.5 million U.S. children are using booster seats. In 2000, 721 children aged five to nine were killed and 103,000 were injured in car accidents.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation approved Anton's Law in August 2001, and the Senate passed the measure by unanimous consent on February 25 of this year. Last month, in order to help ensure that this important measure is placed on the President's desk for signature before the end of the year, the Senate Commerce Committee accepted my amendment to insert Anton's Law in the Senate version of the National Transportation Safety Board Reauthorization bill, S. 2950, which the Committee then approved by unanimous consent. I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their continued support of this bipartisan legislation that will help to improve the safety and effectiveness of child restraints in automobiles and protect our Nation's young people.

Like the bill that I introduced in this body, the bill that was passed yesterday by the House of Representatives will improve the safety of children from 4 to 16 years old by requiring the Secretary of Transportation to initiate a rulemaking regarding establishing performance standards for child restraints, especially for booster seats, for children weighing more than 50 pounds. This measure will also lead to the development of a 10-year-old dummy that can be used to test child restraint devices. It also requires automobile manufacturers to install three-point lap and shoulder belts in all rear seating positions of passenger vehicles.

Since February, I have been working to have this measure passed by the House, and I commend them for the work that they have done on this important issue. While I am happy that Anton's Law will finally be presented to the President, this bill represents only part of what the Senate sought to accomplish when we passed Anton's Law in February. The Senate's version of Anton's Law, unlike the House bill, contained provisions that would extend for 2 years a Federal grant program for States to promote child passenger safety and education, and that would encourage State action by providing States with financial incentives to adopt mandatory booster seat laws by 2004. Absent this incentive grant program, States will have little impetus to promulgate the laws needed to adequately protect this group of children. As I have already mentioned, the version of Anton's Law passed by the Senate this year has been incorporated in the Senate's version of the National Transportation Safety Board Reauthorization bill. I urge the conferees

from both the House and the Senate to retain these grant provisions in the conference report of this bill.

I thank Congressman SHIMKUS and Chairman TAUZIN for their work in securing passage of Anton's Law by the House of Representatives, and urge President Bush to sign this necessary child safety bill into law as soon as possible.

2001 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION UNIFORM CRIME REPORT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Annual Uniform Crime Report for 2001, 15,980 people were murdered last year; 8,719 of the 15,980 deaths were caused by a firearm, and of those murders, 6,790 were caused by a handgun. Six hundred and seventy-two murders occurred in my home State of Michigan. These numbers are staggering. There are several commonsense bills in the Senate that would reduce gun violence and gun crime, and I am disappointed that it appears that the 107th Congress will come to a close without the enactment of meaningful gun safety legislation.

On April 24, 2001, Senator REED introduced the Gun Show Background Check Act. This bill would close a loophole in the law which allows unlicensed private gun dealers to sell guns without performing a National Instant Criminal Background System check. I cosponsored that bill because I believe it would be an important tool to prevent guns from getting into the hands of criminals and other people prohibited from owning a firearm.

I am also a cosponsor of Senator DURBIN's Children's Access Prevention Act. Under this bill, adults who fail to lock up a loaded firearm or an unloaded firearm with ammunition would be held liable if the weapon is taken by a child and used to kill or injure themselves or another person. The bill also increases the penalties for selling a gun to a juvenile and creates a gun safety education program that includes parent-teacher organizations, local law enforcement and community organizations. This bill is similar to a bill President Bush signed into law during his tenure as the Governor of Texas.

More recently, I cosponsored Senator KOHL's Ballistics, Law Assistance, and Safety Technology Act, or BLAST Act, which would require licensed firearms manufacturers to test fire firearms, and prepare ballistics images of the fired bullets and casings of new firearms. Expanding the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network to include these ballistics images would increase the crime gun tracing capabilities of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. ATF agents could quickly identify firearms by using the ballistics images of cartridge casings and bullets recovered at crime scenes, even when criminals obliterate the serial number.

In recent months, we have seen snipers with an assault rifle kill people around the country and a student at the University of Arizona go to his school and kill three of his teachers and himself. These events represent only a few of the thousands of murders that have already occurred this year. These brutal killing sprees were given national media attention, and hopefully will generate legislative action. While there is little time left in the 107th Congress to address these issues, it is critical that we press for consideration of these issues early in 108th Congress.

THE CONFIRMATION OF 98 JUDICIAL NOMINEES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate confirmed the 98th judicial nominee of President George W. Bush.

These past 16 months, since the reorganization of the Senate Judiciary Committee following the change in majority last year, have been an historic and impressive period in which we have fairly considered hundreds of the President's executive and judicial branch nominees. Despite partisan rhetoric to the contrary, the Senate has done a good job.

If this Senate had a "lousy" record on judicial confirmations, then the Republican leadership, which controlled the pace on confirmations from 1995 through the first part of 2001, must have been far, far worse than "lousy". Under Republican control judicial vacancies on the Courts of Appeals more than doubled, from 16 to 33, and overall vacancies rose from 65 to 110. We have heard no criticism from the White House of that period, in which Senate Republicans blocked President Clinton's nominees. We have heard no apologies from the Republican leadership that engineered those efforts.

Just last night, in one night, the Democratic-led Senate confirmed more judges, 18, including more circuit judges, than the Republican-led Senate allowed to be confirmed in the entire 1996 session more in one day than Republicans were willing to proceed on for an entire year. Seventeen of those judges were the nominations we were able to get reported from the Committee on October 8 with some significant effort and in spite of Republican efforts to divert the Committee into other matters.

This week the Committee met, again, as I had said it would. We considered the nominations of Dennis Shedd and Michael McConnell and voted on them as the 101st and 102nd judicial nominations voted on by the Committee during the last 16 months and reported them to the Senate. One hundred judicial nominations have now been reported favorably to the Senate by the Judiciary Committee during the past 16 months; two were rejected. One indication of the fairness with which we have conducted ourselves is that as

chairman I have proceeded to consider nominations that I do not support and the Committee has reported nominations that I do not support to the Senate. As I said during this week's Committee consideration of the Shedd nomination, for example, having examined his record as a District Court Judge, I intend to vote against his nomination to the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

With the Senate's actions last night, we have confirmed 98 of this President's judicial nominees in only 16 months. This compares most favorably to the 38 judicial confirmations averaged per year during the six and one-half years when the Republican majority was in control of the Senate. Last night, the Senate confirmed another 18 judicial nominees. In the entire 1996 session over the course of an entire year, the Republican majority allowed only 17 district court judges to be confirmed all year and would not confirm a single circuit court nominee—not one. Last night, the Democratic-led Senate confirmed all 17 district court nominees reported to the Senate by the Judiciary Committee after our October 8 business session as well as a 6th Circuit nominee from Kentucky. The Democratic-led Senate exceeded in one day what it took the Republican majority of the Senate an entire year to accomplish. That should put our historic demonstration of bipartisanship toward this President's judicial nominees in perspective.

The 17 district court nominees confirmed last night were on the Senate calendar because, on October 8, the Senate Judiciary Committee was able to report those nominations despite unparalleled personal attacks by Republicans on me as chairman. The circuit court nominee confirmed last night, Professor John Rogers, is the second of this President's judicial nominees confirmed to the Sixth Circuit this year. They are the first confirmations to the 6th Circuit since 1997, when Republicans for four years shut down consideration of President Clinton's nominees to that circuit. Three of President Clinton's nominees to that court were never allowed a hearing by the Republican majority; the Democratic majority has, in contrast, proceeded to confirm two new judges to that same circuit court.

The hard, thankless, but steady work of the Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee has reduced judicial vacancies substantially during these last 16 months. We inherited 110 vacancies and an additional 49 have arisen since July 10, 2002. Today, after 98 confirmations, district and circuit court vacancies combined number only 60—not the more than 150 vacancies that would exist had we shut down the process or the 111 vacancies that would exist if we had followed the Republican pace of confirmation during the Clinton administration. The President has failed to send nominations for almost half of the 60 current vacancies on the